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ABSTRACT

Information about the goals and goal achievement of Black and White community college students was obtained from a follow-up survey mailed in Spring, 1978, to all persons enrolled as first-time students in Maryland community colleges in Fall, 1974. Additional information on the Maryland community college system was included in the data analysis. Comprehensive community colleges are available in 23 of Maryland's 24 counties, serving 99% of the state's population. Average annual tuition for full-time students is about $500. Black students enroll in approximate relationship to their number in each college's service area. Considerable differences were found between the characteristics and educational experiences of Black and White students. Black students were more likely to be female, to attend full-time, and to be in business and commerce programs. Over half of the Black students received Basic Educational Opportunity Grants of just over $600. While Black students were somewhat older and took more credits than Whites, the Black students completed fewer credits and were less likely to achieve an associate degree goal. Black students did not achieve their transfer goals as often as Whites, but no differences were found in rate of employment goal achievement. The study report includes a discussion of the Maryland community college system, and the policy implications that result from the data analysis. (Author/DB)

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Maryland State Board for Community Colleges

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BLACK AND WHITE STUDENTS IN MARYLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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Maryland State Board for Community Colleges

In it's 1968 report, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders concluded that racism in the United States kept blacks in inferior schools, barred them from fair employment, and created a sense of hopelessness and despair. One change that has taken place in higher education since 1968 has been the number of students enrolled in the community colleges. The proportion of college students enrolled nationally at the community college level has risen from 24 percent in 1968 to 35 percent in 1975 (NCES, 1977). Black students have been more heavily involved in this growth than whites. In 1976, 45 percent of black college students were in community colleges, versus 37 percent of the white college students (Thomas,1978). Among the basic types of institution in the United States, community colleges enroll a higher proportion of blacks(11.8 percent) than four-year colleges(9.8 percent), graduate schools(6.1percent) or professional schools (4.8percent). Thus, black community college enrollment more closely approximates the percentage of "college age" blacks in the population, 12.5 percent. Since community colleges have figured so prominently in the increased enrollment of black students, more information is needed about their status and achievements. This article describes black and white students, their goals and achievements in one state with an extensive community college system. Policy implications for the federal government, education agencies, and institutions are explored.

Maryland Higher Education

Structure and Mission. Higher education in Maryland is organized in a tripartite structure, with community colleges, state universities and colleges, and a

university. The university and the state college segments each have a governing board appointed by the Governor. Community colleges are locally controlled, each having a board of trustees. Coordination is exercised by the State Board for Higher Education over all institutions, and by the State Board for Community Colleges for its segment. Twenty percent of all public board members are black, and 14 percent of the community college board members are black.

The mission of the University of Maryland is to provide teaching, research, and service, with emphasis on upperclass instruction and advanced research. The primary mission of the state universities and colleges is to provide high quality baccalaureate and master's education. The secondary mission is to engage in limited research and service. The mission of the community colleges is to provide high quality transfer and career programs, continuing education and community service at low tuition in response to local educational needs.

Enrollment and Tuition. In Fall, 1978, Maryland had 49 colleges and universities, 26 public and 23 private. The public institutions enrolled 186,689 students in 17 community colleges, 8 state universities and colleges, and one multi-campus university. In a state where 21 percent of the population are black, the public institutions enrolled 14 percent black students and the community colleges enrolled 19 percent blacks. Of the 26 public institutions, 4 are predomimantly black and 22 are predominately white. Slightly over half of the black students are enrolled in the predominantly white institutions. Among the community colleges, one is predominantly black, and it enrolls 39 percent of the black community college students. With a few exceptions, community colleges enroll black students in proportion to their numbers in the college's service area, defined as a county or several contiguous counties. In 1978, 23 of 24 counties, representing 99 percent of the population, were served by a community college. Willingham (1970) defined a free-access college, in part, as one located within 45 minutes from the students'

homes. The criterion is met for nearly every citizen of Maryland.

In Fall, 1978, tuition at the University of Maryland and the state universities and colleges for a full-time student was about $800 annually. At the community colleges, it was about $500. Willingham's definition of a free-access college also required a tuition less than $400 in the 1968-1969 academic year. Allowing for nearly 100 percent inflation in the last ten years, all of Maryland's public institutions meet the financial criterion.

Programs. The University of Maryland offers a wide range of programs through the doctorate, and first professional degrees in law and medicine. The state universities and colleges offer programs through the Master's level. Community colleges are comprehensive institutions, offering transfer, occupational, and community service programs. A statewide transfer agreement allows students to move to four-year colleges with minimal loss of credits. The community colleges offer programs in 119 occupational areas. While the number of programs offered varies by college, most offer such programs as secretarial science, law enforcement, data processing, nursing, and business management. Awards for occupational programs include a certificate for 12-45 credits, and the Associate in Arts degree for 60 credits. Fifteen high cost, low enrollment occupational programs are offered on a regional basis, with students able to attend from other counties at in-county rates.

Remedial programs are available to some extent in the University of Maryland, to a greater extent at the state colleges, and extensively in the community colleges. In the community colleges, credit and noncredit courses are offered primarily in English and mathematics. Using diagnostic tests or high school grades, students are counseled into the appropriate courses. Some courses meet in the traditional mode, while others are open laboratories. Most programs deal mostly with cognitive skill development, and not with affective development, such

as self-concept. One problem is that placement into remedial courses is done more readily with full-time students; part-time students are not required to submit transcripts or test scores, and such students constitute the majority of the community college student body.

Student Characteristics

Black and white students differ considerably on many demographic characteristics in Maryland community colleges, Fall 1978. There are more females among black students (61 percent vs. 56 percent among whites) and more of the black students attend full-time (37 percent vs. 31 percent). The greater full-time attendance among blacks may be explained by increased receipt of financial aid, which often requires full-time attendance. However, the critical point is that the majority of community college students attend part-time, a very different charateristic than their counterparts in the four-year institutions. Approximately equal numbers of students are in transfer programs as in occupational programs, and blacks and whites are in transfer programs in about the same proportion. In the occupational programs, though, black students enroll slightly more often in business and commerce programs. Mingle(1978) also found that blacks were overrepresented in business and management disciplines nationally. Black students tend to carry more credits per semester than whites (8.5 vs. 7.7), a predictable result since more black students attend full-time. While the median age of black students at 24.5 is one year higher than white students, the distribution is different. Blacks are more concentrated in the 20-29 year interval; whites are more frequent than blacks among students aged 40 and above. A similar proportion of black and white students are from out-of-state, about two percent.

Information about the abilities of incoming students is incomplete because not all colleges require standard tests for admission, and the colleges that do

require them generally collect results only for full-time students. However, scores from the Scholastic Aptitude Test and the American College Testing Program are available for a sample of Maryland community college students. The ACT composite for enrolled freshmen was 16.4, the SAT-Verbal was 378 and the SAT-Math was 411. Using data from the CEEB Student Data Questionnaire, the median family income of black students in 1976 was $12,400 while the median income of white families was $17,600. In fiscal year 1978, 52 percent of black students received an average Basic Educational Opportunity Grant of $604, while 6 percent of the white students received an average BEOG of $617. During the same year, five percent of the black students received an average National Direct Student Loan of $360, while one percent of the white students received an average NDSL loan of $404.

Within three and one-half years after entry, black students typically complete 27 credits, compared with 33 credits for whites. The fewer credits completed and a higher credit load per semester suggests that blacks attend for a somewhat shorter period. At the end of 3 1/2 years, 14 percent of all entrants are still enrolled in the community college, and about 15 percent have received an Associate degree, 12 percent among blacks and 16 percent among whites.

Student Goals and Goal Achievement

Information about the goals and goal achievement of community college students was obtained from a survey that was mailed in Spring, 1978 to all persons who were first-time students in Maryland community colleges in Fall, 1974[1]. Previous studies of community college students indicated the need to survey students several years after entry, since so many students attend part-time. A

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[1]Appreciation is extended to the follow-up study coordinators in each community college.

standard survey was mailed by each college to a total of 23,199 students, and a response rate of 34 percent was achieved. Allowing for surveys returned as undeliverable, 43 percent of the students receiving the survey responded.

Student Goals. Information about the academic goals of the students is given in Table 1. While a majority of the students sought a certificate or Associate degree, a high percentage of the students came to the community college for courses of interest, apart from a degree. Such a phenomenon is quite different from that of the four-year colleges and universities, where it is assumed that nearly all students come at least with the intention of completing a degree program. There are significant racial differences in academic goals, with black students being more interested in a degree or certificate than whites. Howard University researchers also found that black students tended to have equal or higher educational aspirations than white students (ISEP, 1976).

Personal goal reflects the functional concern of the student, "What do I want to do with my community college education?" Transfer is the most frequent personal goal for whites (34 percent), but only 22 percent of blacks seek transfer. Career-related goals are more important to the black students, with 43 percent seeking to prepare for a new career or to upgrade skills in a current job. The comparable figure for whites is 29 percent, and only half as many whites are attending to update skills in their current job. Such a career orientation may serve black students well in the future, as manpower projections show substantial growth in opportunities for persons with technical skills, and much more restricted openings for persons with advanced degrees. A recent study of the economic impacts of community college attendance showed that a Maryland community college student will earn 25 percent more than a high school graduate (Linthicum, 1978). About one-third of the students of both races attend for personal growth

reasons, and not to prepare specifically for transfer or employment.

Goal Achievement. Table 1 also shows student goal achievement among blacks and whites in Maryland community colleges. Twenty-three percent of the black students that held a degree goal received an Associate degree. The comparable figure for white students was 37 percent, a statistically significant difference. Degree goal achievement is used rather than simple degree status because so many students attend only for courses. Disregarding reasons for attendance, only about 15 percent of community college students receive a degree. Among community college students who attend for assistance with preparation for a new job or upgrading skills, about three-fourths are successful, and there are no racial differences. Disregarding reasons for attendance, about 60 percent of the former community college students are employed full-time and 20 percent are employed part-time. About half of the students are employed in the county of their community college, and over 90 percent work in Maryland and the District of Columbia.

Among students who attend to prepare for transfer, 53 percent of the blacks and 71 percent of the whites were successful, a statistically significant difference. Disregarding reasons for attendance, about one-third of the students transfer. Most of the students transfer to public institutions in Maryland, 25 percent to state colleges and 30 percent to the University of Maryland. Blacks are more prone to attend one of the state colleges (38 percent vs. 26 percent for whites).

Table 1

GOALS AND GOAL ACHIEVEMENT AMONG BLACK AND WHITE STUDENTS
IN MARYLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGES
1974 ENTRANTS

	Percentage Among Blacks	Percentage Among Whites
(Sample size)	(782)	(6,247)
Academic Goal		
Courses of Interest	26%	36%
Certificate	10	6
Associate in Arts	64	58
Personal Goal		
Exploration of New Career or Academic Area	15	14
Preparation for New Career	21	17
Transfer	22	34
Update Skills in Current Job	22	12
Interest and Self-enrichment	17	19
Other	3	3
Degree Goal and Received Degree	23	37
Career Goal and Was Employed Full-time	76	75
Transfer Goal and Transferred	53	71

All racial differences significant at .001 except career goal achievement, where the difference was not significant.

Reasons for Lower Goal Achievement. Why do black students have less degree and transfer goal achievement? In an attempt to isolate some of the causes, the one predominantely black community college was eliminated from the analysis. The racial differences were less intense but still present. Studies by Astin(1977) and Chickering(1974) suggest that full-time residential attendance

enhances persistence and degree achievement. While none of Maryland's community colleges offer housing, the data were analyzed for full-time students, who have a more intense educational experience. Again, the racial differences were less extreme but still apparent.

There is evidence that black students are academically less prepared than whites when they enroll. The high school grade average of blacks is 2.03, compared with 2.55 for whites. First-time black students comprise 30 percent of the students in remedial English courses, while only comprising 10 percent of the introductory college-level English courses (Linthicum, 1979). Requirements for the associate degree and for transfer programs include English, math and science courses not present in many occupational programs. The combination of less academic preparation and a math-English oriented curriculum could help to explain the lower rates of degree and transfer achievement for blacks. Linthicum also studied the effectiveness of remedial programs. First-time students who took remedial English courses were compared with students who enrolled directly in college-level English. Forty-one percent of the students who began in remedial English stayed at the college for four semesters, versus 53 percent of the students who began in college-level English. The latter group also completed a higher percentage of their hours attempted (90 percent vs. 76 percent) and earned higher cumulative grade point averages (2.66 vs. 1.94 on a 4.0 system). The study concluded that students in remedial programs were reasonably successful in their community college work, but also pointed to the need for competent diagnostic testing of all students (full and part-time), more faculty development, and for programs that go beyond cognitive skills to personal factors such as self-concept and attitudes about learning.

Reasons for Discontinuing. Why do black students leave the community

college, and how do they rate their experiences? Table 2 shows significant racial differences in reasons for leaving among nongraduates. The dominant reason for leaving is that the student's educational goal was achieved, and the racial differences on that reason are minimal. While predictably fewer black students leave to transfer(fewer blacks have transfer goals), nearly twice as many blacks leave because of a scheduling conflict between their job and their studies. In addition, six percent of blacks said that they discontinued their studies because financial aid was not sufficient compared to only one percent of whites. The finding underscores the need for strong state and federal programs of financial aid to ensure equal educational opportunity. Since blacks experience less degree and transfer goal achievement, it is important to see if they evaluate their program and college differently than whites. Black students tended to rate their program and their college as favorably as white students. About 80 percent would recommend their program of study to a friend, and about 90 percent would recommend their college.

Table 2

REASONS FOR LEAVING AND COLLEGE EVALUATION
AMONG BLACKS AND WHITES
IN MARYLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGES
1974 ENTRANTS

Variable	Percentage Among Blacks	Percentage Among Whites
(Sample Size)	(782)	(6,247)
Primary Reason for Leaving Among Nongraduates		
Achieved Educational Goal	27%	29%
Transferred	9	17
Scheduling Conflict	19	10
Personal-Marriage	11	10
Accepted Job	7	8
Program Not Available	3	7
Changed Goal	4	4
Unsure of Major	3	4
Dissatisfied with Teaching	2	2
Low Grades	1	1
Courses Too Difficult	1	1
Aid Not Available	2	1
Aid Not Sufficient	6	1
College Was Too Expensive	1	1
Would You Recommend This Program of Study To a Friend?		
Yes	80	78
No	6	8
Uncertain	14	14
Would You Recommend This College To a Friend?		
Yes	86	90
No	4	3
Uncertain	9	7

Racial differences in reasons for leaving significant at .001; differences on evaluation questions not significant.

In Four Critical Years, Astin(1977) reported on the effects of college attendance. He stated that for the eighteen-year-old going directly from high school to college, the public community college does not represent an "equal educational opportunity" compared with other types of institutions. The chances of persisting to a baccalaureate degree are considerably lower among community college students. Astin's conclusion is based upon assumptions about the desirability of most students getting bachelors degrees and the similarity of students at community and four-year colleges. The Maryland study found that only 22 percent of the first-time entrants were 18-19 years old and desired to transfer (25 percent of the whites and only 8 percent of the blacks). While Astin's findings about persistence to the baccalaureate may be true, the results do not deal with the majority of community college students. A student may enter a community college enrolled in a business program that leads to an Associate in Arts degree. However, the student's personal goal may be to take three courses in accounting to increase job skills. Upon completion of the courses, the student is not a drop-out, but rather a drop-in, who came for a modest goal and achieved it.

Summary of Maryland Analysis. Comprehensive community colleges are available in 23 of Maryland's 24 counties, serving 99 percent of the population. Average annual tuition for a full-time student is about $500 and black students enroll in approximate relationship to their number in each college's service area. Considerable differences were found between the educational experiences of blacks and white students. Black students were more likely to be female, to attend full-time, and to be in business and commerce programs than whites. Over half of the Black students received BEO Grants of just over $600. While black students were somewhat older and took more credits than whites, the black students completed fewer credits and were less likely to achieve an associate degree goal. Black students did not achieve their transfer goals as often as whites, but no differences

were found in the rate of employment goal achievement. Three-fourths of the black students who came to the community college for a career development goal were employed full-time within 3 1/2 years after entry.

Policy Implications

In the last 10 years, an increasing proportion of students have enrolled in community colleges, and blacks have come to community colleges in even greater numbers. What are the policy issues that must be addressed to assist blacks with equal educational opportunity?

Distorted perception of the community college. There is an urgent need for persons in state and federal agencies and in educational institutions to see community colleges through clearer lenses. Having been educated in a four-year college, many policy-makers assume that a community college is half of a four-year experience. After all, four minus two equals two! However, in this case, the subtraction is not valid. In Maryland, and in many other parts of the country, community colleges do not have majors, freshmen, or college-age population; they don't even have many graduates! All four key terms in the preceeding sentence are used by persons to describe higher education, including the "two-year" colleges. Policy makers must look at the reality of community colleges, and how students are using them. The language used by policy-makers reflects their thinking, and prevents competent and sensitive planning and decision-making. For example, the Student Data Questionnaire of the CEEB asks about educational aspirations, but allows no provision for simply courses of interest. Many students do attend to take a few selected courses, but that option is not available to the respondent, who either leaves the item blank or bends his or her intention into a category that really does not describe the facts. Many persons (even among community college

faculty!) are surprised and dismayed to learn that 15 percent of community college students graduate with an AA degree. After all, the graduation rate "should be" so much higher, when viewed through four-year lenses.

Mission of the Community College. When policy-makers see more clearly how community colleges are being used by students, it will allow more rapid development of a new mission. The new mission, already approached in many places, weaves the community college into the continuous education of citizens. There is a trend for education and work to be less discrete, and for persons to move in and out of college periodically throughout their lives. Community colleges have become a part of the trend with noncredit courses, weekend schedules, televised courses, and contractual arrangements with business and industry. This adult education mission is perhaps more valuable to blacks than whites because (1)blacks often complete fewer credits than whites in their initial attendance, (2)the offerings are likely to be job-related, and (3)the college itself is more likely to be within commuting distance of the student.

Research and Dissemination. There must be more research about the role and experiences of blacks in community colleges, and more awareness of the research that already exists. Specifically, statewide follow-up studies of entering students (not graduates) are needed to find out more about goals and correlates of black success. Additional federal funds must be made available to conduct such research. The Vocational Education Data System(VEDS) was authorized by the Education Amendments of 1976 and requires student follow-up data, but imposes a heavy set of administrative requirements and provides no specific new money for the task. The research must be done as close to the college level as possible for maximum benefit to the students. In other words, for colleges to know and use the data, they must be involved in the design, administration, and interpretation. Cooperative arrangements between state agencies and colleges can be quite

successful in producing competent and useful results. Another subject for additional research is remedial education and its impact upon course attrition, grades, and graduation.

Perhaps even more important than additional research is the need for better dissemination of the results of studies already on the shelf. Researchers have a tendency to speak mostly with researchers, in journals, the ERIC system, and professional meetings. At all levels, researchers must meet with the policy-makers, share the results, and discuss the implications for policy. The traditionally distributed research report is simply not read, much less acted upon. Evidence of the failure in communication is seen in the distorted perception mentioned above.

Student Financial Aid. The Maryland student follow-up study found that six percent of blacks said they left college because financial aid was not sufficient compared to only one percent of whites. The finding underscores the strong need for continuation and expansion of state and federal student financial aid. A comprehensive program of student finanical aid not only will help black students get and stay in college, it will help to ensure that the choice about which college to attend will be made on the basis of the student's goals and abilities, and not socio-economic status. A previous study showed that the income of the parents was related to the type of institution attended (ISEP, 1976).

The fact that so many community college students attend part-time raises a special problem in connection with financial aid. Because of eligibility guidelines and processing formulae of the federal government, 64 percent of the community college students nationally receive less than eight percent of the federal aid dollars (Hamilton, 1979). A student must take 12 credits to qualify for the maximum amount under the Basic Educational Opportunity Grant program. If a student takes between 6 and 11 credits, he or she is eligible for a reduced amount. While it may be reasonable to provide higher grants for carrying more credits, the policy may

also be encouraging low income students to take more credits than they can handle. Carrying fewer than six credits denies all federal financial assistance. Because federal policy-makers view part-time students as less than serious about their academic work, millions of persons among the working poor are denied student financial assistance. A similar policy issue exists in Maryland, where General State Scholarships are granted only to full-time students. Such a policy is detrimental to the many black students who attend a community college to upgrade skills in a current job.

Remedial Education and the Open Door. Embracing the open-door concept, most community colleges have tried to eliminate as many barriers as possible to college attendance. In many places, a student can walk off the street on the last day of registration, apply, register, and enroll in the same day. The openness of the community college doors has been an asset, but one unintended consequence might be that the skills and goals of the student are not properly matched with the offerings of the college. High school transcripts, aptitude tests, and placement inventories all may discourage certain students. However, they may be necessary to provide competent counseling for incoming students. Much has been written about the revolving door; no student is well served by it. Certain entry requirements may be necessary, not to increase the selectivity of the college, but to place the student in the best instructional setting.

Course Scheduling. The student follow-up study found that scheduling conflicts between courses and work were often cited as a reason for leaving the college. Blacks gave this reason for leaving twice as often as whites, perhaps a result of their greater career orientation. The scheduling of courses, therefore is not a color-free task, and colleges need to be aware that any reduction in the quantity or quality of evening and weekend courses will adversely affect black students.

Changes in Society. All persons and institutions in society must work harder to create equal opportunity for blacks. Success in the community is linked with the broader success of blacks in the society. In comparison with whites in the United States, black persons generally earn a fraction of the wages, work in lower positions, have inferior health care, and live in less adequate housing. Against such a background, it would be naive to assume that community colleges would provide all the support needed to erase vestiges of discrimination. One dramatic example of the phenomenon is the high correlation between Scholastic Aptitude Test scores and gross parental income (College Entrance Examination Board, 1975). When parental income is less than $15,283, average SAT scores are less than 350. When parental income is $23,069, average SAT scores are 600 to 650. There is a complex interrelationship in society between black success in community colleges, and black success in employment and housing. Lorraine Hansberry has written about "the dream deferred." Along with other educational institutions, community colleges have a certain role in making sure that the dreams of black students are not deferred, but realized.

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